

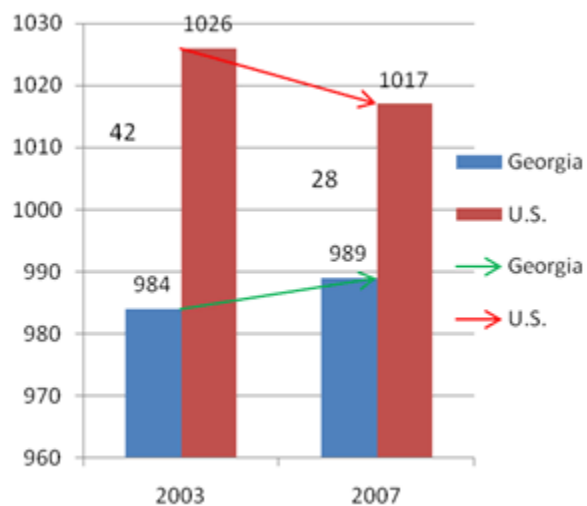


## GEORGIA'S SAT TRENDS: ARE WE MOVING THE NEEDLE?

**There is good news to report in Georgia education.** Since 2003, the gap between Georgia and the national average on the Critical Reading and Math sections of the SAT has shrunk by 14 points.

In that time, Georgia's Critical Reading + Math scores have increased by 5 points, while the average across the country has dropped by 9.

In 2005-06, the Writing section was added to the SAT, increasing the possible total from 1600 points to 2400 points. In 2007, this meant that Georgia's overall average trailed the national average, 1472 to 1511.



Critical Reading + Math Scores: 2003 and 2007

### Who's beating the national average?

System	CR	M	W	Total	Test-takers
Rome City	538	547	536	1621	131
Fulton	527	540	528	1595	3744
Oconee	524	534	517	1575	390
Decatur City	537	527	510	1574	147
Cherokee	519	521	508	1548	1129
Fayette	515	529	504	1548	1480
Forsyth	517	521	508	1546	1065
Bleckley	515	530	500	1545	43
Jefferson City	505	549	506	1560	81
Floyd	516	515	504	1535	153
Cobb	515	517	502	1534	5221
Gwinnett	504	527	493	1524	6155
Marietta City	505	519	498	1522	255
Whitfield	512	505	498	1515	157
Columbia	505	518	490	1513	1029
National Ave.	502	515	494	1511	1,494,531
Georgia Ave.	494	495	483	1472	59,562

Of the school systems in Georgia with 20 or more 2007 SAT test-takers, 15 had total scores above the national average of 1511 (Critical Reading + Math + Writing).

Five of these school systems' scores include only one high school, but the remaining 10 had multiple schools and still beat the national average.

All told, these 15 school systems represent approximately 36% of Georgia's 2007 SAT test-takers.

Unfortunately, this also means that the average for every other school system in Georgia was below the national average.

**Georgia's 2007 SAT participation rate was 69% compared with the national average of 48%.**

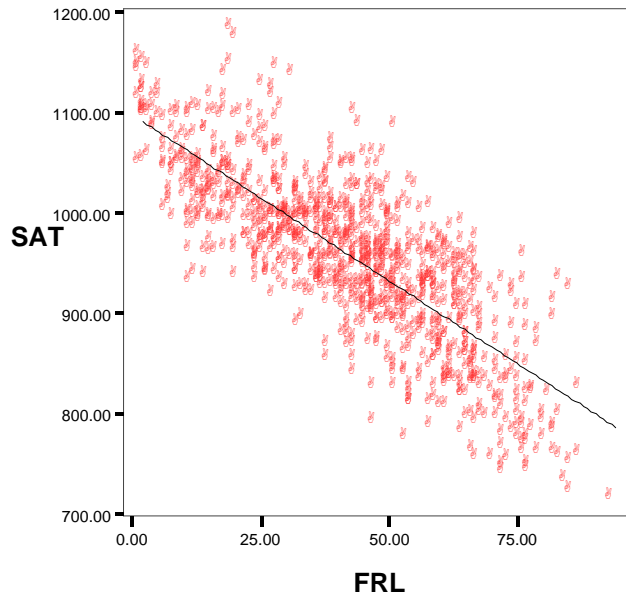
### Do poverty rates predict SAT scores?

Yes, a school's poverty rate is a strong predictor of its standardized test scores. In fact, comparing schools and systems within Georgia based on their scores alone is probably not the clearest way to compare them.

To bypass this inherent test score advantage enjoyed by low-poverty schools, the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) conducted an apples-to-apples comparison of schools' SAT success. It used a regression analysis that evaluated how well Georgia public schools' free/reduced price lunch (FRL) eligibility rates predicted their SAT scores.

**How did this work??**

- 1) GOSA first identified public schools that had 20 or more SAT test takers for each of the past three years.
- 2) Every school’s SAT score and FRL rate for each of the past 3 years was included individually, and their most recent SAT scores (critical reading + math) were used (n=951).
- 3) Schools’ actual 3-year SAT averages were then compared to the scores predicted by their 3-year FRL rate average and the regression equation.



**The results demonstrated that SAT scores were highly correlated (-0.791) with FRL eligibility; the higher a school’s percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch, the lower its actual SAT scores were.** This is not to say that poverty “caused” lower test scores, but only that a clear relationship exists between SAT scores and FRL rates.

District	School
Richmond	Davidson Magnet School
DeKalb	Chamblee High School
Rome City	Rome High School
Atlanta City	Grady High School
Gwinnett	Norcross High School
Bleckley	Bleckley County High School
Richmond	Westside High School
Whitfield	Southeast Whitfield County High School
Muscogee	Columbus High School
Fulton	North Springs High School
DeKalb	Lakeside High School
Carroll	Bowdon High School
Marietta City	Marietta High School

**Who are Georgia’s homerun hitters?**

This model only estimates how well a school would be expected to perform based on three years’ worth of SAT and FRL data. But just because SAT scores are associated with FRL eligibility does not mean that schools with many poor students cannot or did not perform well. In fact, 13 high schools in Georgia significantly outperformed their predicted scores.\*

As one might expect, Davidson, Chamblee, Grady, Norcross, Columbus, and North Springs High Schools offer magnet or other programs that may attract higher-performing low-income students. This likely helped them outscore the prediction.

\* This paper defines “significant” as 1 standard deviation (82 points) or more.

**What helped boost those SAT scores?**

It may be more useful, then, for education stakeholders to look critically at the techniques used by the non-magnet schools to increase their students’ SAT scores. Such information will enable stakeholders to make inferences about effective preparation.

The SAT program specialist at the Georgia Department of Education, Becky Chambers, will research the preparation techniques used by the over-performing high schools. Her findings will be published in the next GOSA electronic bulletin so that those strategies can be replicated by all high schools.

**Georgia’s SAT Needle**

In summary, a number of high schools in Georgia are exceeding national SAT averages and are not accepting poverty as an excuse for low achievement. As the rest of the nation’s SAT scores have dropped over the past five years, Georgia’s students have consistently increased their math and critical reading scores. While there is still room for improvement in all schools, the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement commends those that are high performers, exceeding expectations, or showing large gains in student achievement.

For more information, contact the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, [GOSA@gov.state.ga.us](mailto:GOSA@gov.state.ga.us).